



4701 Willard Avenue, #218
Chevy Chase, MD 20815

(301) 656-4068

PUBLIC AFFAIRS STAFF

DayBreak

CNN-TV

September 3, 1991 8:00 A.M.

Washington, D.C.

Opposition to Robert Gates as CIA Director

REID COLLINS: There's been a surprising development in the nomination of Robert Gates to be the new Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. Sources say that a number of current and former CIA employees have told Senate investigators they don't think Gates is the right man to head the spy agency.

CNN Special Assignment correspondent Steven Emerson has obtained exclusive on-camera interviews with two former CIA staffers who are publicly opposing Gates' nomination. And here is his report.

PRESIDENT BUSH [5/14/91]: Well, I'm pleased to nominate Robert Gates to be the Director of Central Intelligence.

STEVEN EMERSON: Since last May the Senate Intelligence Committee has been investigating Robert Gates' background, in preparation for his confirmation hearings scheduled later this month. For most of the summer the investigation focused on Mr. Gates' role in the Iran-Contra affair and whether he had made misleading statements to Congress in previous testimony. But CNN

has learned that within the past six weeks new opposition to Mr. Gates has emerged from analysts and agents within the CIA itself. In an unprecedented break in the rank and file of the CIA, more than one dozen former and current employees of the CIA have criticized the nomination of Robert Gates, according to Senate Intelligence Committee officials. Significantly, most have based their objections not on the Iran-Contra affair, but rather on Mr. Gates' performance as a top official in the CIA from 1982 through 1989.

In exclusive on-camera interviews with CNN, two former intelligence analysts have broken the traditional code of silence in publicly opposing the nomination of Robert Gates.

JOHN GENTRY: I believe that the Agency has fundamental problems of management and of politicization of analysis, and I believe that Robert Gates was a major contributor to the problems that continue in the Agency's Directorate of Intelligence to this day.

EMERSON: John Gentry spent almost 12 years as an economist with the CIA until he resigned late last year over what he claimed was an institutionalized lack of integrity at the CIA.

GENTRY: I and a number of others perceived these problems to have occurred immediately after the appointment of Robert Gates as the Deputy Director for Intelligence in 1982.

DR. STEPHEN EMERSON: Having known the man and worked for him, I just do not feel that Robert Gates is the man to lead

the U.S. intelligence community into the 21st Century. My personal opinions, I think, are also mirrored by people at the Agency in the Directorate of Intelligence.

EMERSON: Dr. Stephen A. Emerson, who is not related to me, was a CIA foreign policy analyst for eight years before he was terminated in July after a dispute with Agency management. Dr. Emerson and Gentry both charge that under Mr. Gates' tenure analysts' reports were edited to delete information that the White House and State Department did not want to hear. However, a veteran CIA official says that Agency analysts have always complained when managers change their reports.

GEORGE CARVER: I'm sure that I made a number of my colleagues unhappy, just as Bob Gates probably made a number of his. But taking that unhappiness to a view that "He didn't accept my position; therefore he's wrong and probably evil" strikes me as a rather childish response.

EMERSON: Still, analysts point to specific cases where they claim their reports were changed for political reasons.

Example: CIA middle managers ordered analysts to withhold information that one Southeast Asian ally of the United States had engaged in activities detrimental to U.S. interests.

Analysts further charge that intelligence reports about the Soviet Union were slanted to reflect the prevailing political winds.

Still, it is important to point out that no one has

brought any evidence whatsoever that suggests that Robert Gates ordered any of these changes personally.

GENTRY: He created, he fostered, he mandated a series of organizational and procedural changes that prostituted the analysis of the Agency. And this, over time, entered the DI, the Director of Intelligence, culture as a directive to make people happy, as opposed to providing objective, sound, factually accurate intelligence to the United States Government.

DR. EMERSON: During the editing process, yes, certain phrases or words were marked out with comments: "This will not please the folks downtown. Revise the tone."

EMERSON: When you heard the phrase "This will not please the folks downtown," what did you understand that to mean?

DR. EMERSON: Well, it was pretty clear-cut: that someone downtown, usually in State or at the White House, didn't want to hear this. It was bad news or went against some type of policy option that they were thinking about.

I think Robert Gates had a lot to do with that.

EMERSON: In off-camera interviews with CNN, other Agency employees have also charged that Robert Gates politicized intelligence analysis at the CIA.

CARVER: That runs against everything that I've known about Bob Gates. He certainly did nothing of the sort when he worked for me.

EMERSON: Former CIA official George Carver has known Robert Gates since 1973.

CARVER: For a professional officer intervening in the sort of confirmation process, trying to sandbag the elected President's nominee, to my mind, I regard that as unseemly unless there is really some absolutely overriding reason. And I don't find any such reason in connection with the nomination of Bob Gates.

EMERSON: Carver and others caution that the number of former and current CIA employees actively opposing the nomination of Robert Gates is actually very small. Nevertheless, the Senate Intelligence Committee is surprised that normally closed-mouthed CIA analysts have spoken out against the nomination at all.

Steven Emerson, CNN Special Assignment.

COLLINS: CNN asked the CIA to respond to the story, and a spokesman said the Agency defends the accuracy of its analytical reports. He stated further that the Agency feels that Robert Gates, and we're quoting now, is an experienced, brilliant intelligence officer who would bring a lot to the Agency.